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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001586

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AF/SPG AND AF/C  
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: WEST DARFUR GOVERNOR: THE FUR TRIBE IS FIGHTING  
THREE FIRES AT ONCE - THE GOS, ARABS, AND ZAGHAWA

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)  
)

11. (C) SUMMARY: On October 27, former Darfur rebel and current Governor of West Darfur Abulgasim Imam told CDA Fernandez that the Fur tribe is defending itself against three hostile groups, the Government of Sudan, Arab militias, and the Zaghawa tribe. Imam acknowledged the failure of both the Sudan Liberation Movement and the self-proclaimed rebel leader of the Fur, Abdulwahid Al-Nur, and requested that the U.S. support the Fur tribe "as it has suffered more than any other group in Darfur." END SUMMARY.

"ABDUL WAHID IS WEAK AND A POOR LEADER"

12. (C) Visiting Khartoum to participate in the Sudan People's Initiative, Abulgasim Imam requested meeting CDA Fernandez discretely and unofficially, "as I cannot always only represent the government." Abulgasim opened the meeting stating that the situation in West Darfur is "very negative" and then strongly asserted that the Fur suffer from the poor leadership and personal ambition of Paris-based Darfuri Abdul Wahid Al-Nur. "We are becoming a victim from (his) control from outside," stated Imam. Abdulwahid has failed to unite the Sudan Liberation Movement and the Fur people, and his stubbornness stems from this weakness, stated Imam. If Abdul Wahid Al-Nur does participate in negotiations in Qatar alongside JEM's Khalil Ibrahim, he will not represent all of the Fur people and any deal signed only with him will not bring lasting peace to Darfur, stated Imam. The Sudan Liberation Movement has failed to unite, to become a political party, and to fundamentally change Darfur. Other Fur voices need to be included in the political process, asserted Imam.

DARFUR'S THREE FIRES AND ALLEGED U.S. SUPPORT FOR ZAGHAWA

13. (C) Darfur's tribes have become polarized, said Imam, and the Fur have started to fear the Zaghawa as much as the GoS and Arab militia. These are Darfur's three "internal fires" that are compounded by external pressures, asserted Imam. Imam stated that many Darfuris believe that the U.S. consciously supports Zaghawa dominance in the region. CDA Fernandez replied that support for the one signatory of the Darfur Peace Agreement, Minni Minnawi (from the Zaghawa tribe,) should not be construed as a preference for the Zaghawa tribe over others. CDA Fernandez also stated that the NCP's fear of the Zaghawa is well known and that some individuals in the party may be spreading such rumors for their own benefit. While the USG is also against regime ethnic targeting of the Zaghawa, that doesn't mean we favor one tribe over another, "we don't want to see one victimizer

(the regime and its janjaweed allies) substituted for another."

#### A SECURITY STATE

14. (C) Imam stated that the Ministry of Defense, National Intelligence, and other security structures consistently usurp his authority at the state level. Imam added that the Sudanese intelligence holds the real power in Darfur, and that even state governors must bow to the demands of NISS, MoD, and other agencies. Whether it is the approval of visits from diplomats or establishing investigatory committees into recent immigration from West Africa into his state, Imam stated that the security apparatus has stepped in and reversed his decisions using security justifications. He had been specifically prevented in establishing a committee to look at reports of settlement by Khartoum of Arab nomads from neighboring countries onto traditional Fur land in Wadi Salih. Despite this control from the central government, Imam stated, "We want a real authority in the form of a federal system, and we fear a collapse of the government."

15. (C) The Fur would like close coordination with the U.S. during this important period, stated Imam. More specifically, the Fur would appreciate U.S. support for Fur civil society organizations, visits of prominent Fur leaders to the U.S. and "more grass root work in Fur communities." CDA Fernandez replied that the Fur are an essential part of any lasting solution to Darfur and welcomed regular communication with Imam and other Fur leaders. He noted that he intends to travel to the Fur heartland of Jebel Marra on October 30, if he is not prevented from doing so by the

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regime. CDA further agreed that the US (and the international community in general) needs to very much take into account Darfur's complex ethnic reality when supporting Darfuri opposition or counterparts to the Khartoum government.

#### COMMENT

16. (C) A former Fur SLA commander, the sincere and soft-spoken Abulgasim joined the government with the declaration of commitment (DOC) groups following the signing of the DPA in 2006. Now technically part of the government that attacked and displaced many of his fellow Fur tribesmen, Imam represents a series of conflicting identities, interests and constituencies - a heavy burden for one of Sudan's youngest governors. Imam's concern over Abdul Wahid's arrogance, dominance, and misrepresentation of the Fur people is valid, and a point that must be addressed prior to the next round of negotiations on Darfur's future. The governor's fear of the predatory Zaghawa, and misperception of the US role in supporting the DPA, is widely shared among both Darfur's African and Arab tribes. The fact that Darfur's two neighbors who are most involved in the conflict, Libya and Zaghawa-ruled Chad, clearly do tilt towards the Zaghawa, that most military commanders among the rebels come from this minority tribe, and that Zaghawa have been pushing down into Fur agricultural land (just like the Arab tribes who constitute the janjaweed) further exacerbates the complex ethnic tinderbox which is Darfur.

FERNANDEZ